

Prostituted Children Residential Recovery Program Frequently Asked Questions

Where is the funding for the residential recovery program coming from?

So far, \$1,200,000 has been raised or pledged. King County and the City of Seattle have contributed \$350,000, United Way has contributed \$200,000, foundations have contributed \$195,000, several major private donors have contributed \$400,000 and more than 150 individuals have donated another \$40,325. The breadth of financial support shown for this project by our community is remarkable.

How did the idea for this program originate?

The City of Seattle's Human Services Department commissioned a study of the problem of prostituted children. The report, [Who Pays the Price? Assessment of Youth Involvement in Prostitution in Seattle](#), was issued in 2008 and was authored by Dr. Debra Boyer, a cultural anthropologist. As a result of her research, Dr. Boyer identified 238 prostituted children under the age of 18 in King County; of the total identified, 24 were boys. She estimated the total number of prostituted children in King County to be between 300 and 500 at any given time.

When will the program be up and running?

The safe house, operated by YouthCare, will begin accepting referrals in the spring of 2010.

Who will this residential recovery program serve?

The program will serve children, mostly girls, between 14 and 17 years of age who have been caught up in prostitution in Seattle or elsewhere in King County. If a client turns 18 while in the program, services will continue to be provided.

What type of services will these children receive?

A specialized program is needed to provide exploited youth a safe place to separate from the street and prostitution subculture. Most of the youth referred to this program will have been pimped, sometimes by gang members. Breaking the bonds of prostitution will be an important aspect of programming, which will apply the knowledge gained from the fields of domestic violence and traumatic stress disorders. Each youth will have a designated case manager who will provide emotional support, help with legal

and family issues, and in general provide the mentorship, support and guidance they need to successfully recover from their experiences.

The program will feature a structured daily schedule designed to meet both the individual and collective needs of participants. Specialized prostitution recovery services will be provided including counseling for traumatic stress and trauma recovery (under the direction of Harborview's Center for Sexual Assault and Traumatic Stress), treatment for chemical dependency, survivor support groups and health education. Clients will receive medical care, life skills training, support for GED or high school completion, help preparing for enrollment in post-secondary education, job readiness training, employment placement and internships. Lastly, participants will be given safety, security and opportunities to have fun, engage in age-appropriate activities and begin to reclaim their youth.

How do we know if these programs work?

Since there are so few programs in operation, this two year pilot program will be carefully evaluated to determine if it helps the youth decrease their involvement with the criminal justice system, successfully address the mental health and chemical dependency issues they are experiencing and set and achieve personal goals such as obtaining stable and permanent housing, achieving a high school degree or equivalent and preparing for and securing a job.

Where will the recovery program be housed?

The recovery program will be housed in a secure and confidential location. It is important that the facility be a safe haven for youth who need protection from pimps who have exploited them for profit.

Who will administer the residential recovery program?

The program will be operated by YouthCare. Founded in 1974, YouthCare was the first shelter for homeless youth in the Western United States and continues to be a leader in providing services to this vulnerable population. Beginning as a three-bed shelter for runaways, YouthCare has grown and expanded to become a community-based agency with multiple sites serving the greater Seattle area. Today, YouthCare's services range from street outreach and residential housing to education and employment training. YouthCare will provide the residential recovery program services under a contract administered by the City of Seattle's Human Services Department.

Do similar residential recovery programs exist elsewhere?

There are very few programs that provide specialized treatment services to prostituted children. We are aware of just three specialized residential programs which are located in New York, Los Angeles and Atlanta. Prior to the start of this program in our community there were just 41 beds available anywhere in the country to serve prostituted children in the United States.

How do children become involved in prostitution?

Many of these children come from backgrounds of abuse or neglect. They often run away from home to escape situations of emotional or physical pain or they flee homes where domestic violence is present. These kids are especially vulnerable because they seek security and love. The individuals who pimp out these youth take advantage of their neediness. While there are male prostitutes, most victims are girls. A pimp "[sells the dream](#)," telling this highly susceptible girl he loves her and will take care of her. He convinces her that she can show her love by bringing him money earned from prostituting herself. Once the child goes down that path, the pimp exerts more control and uses coercion, threats and violence to keep her in line.

Why aren't these children being punished for breaking the law?

Given what we now know about how children get caught up in prostitution, law enforcement increasingly views underage prostitutes as victims. Our laws are also changing. There are both federal and state laws on the books that recognize prostituted youth as victims and which making the trafficking of children a serious criminal offense.

If you'd like to support the residential recovery program: The City of Seattle has established the Prostituted Children's Rescue Fund; \$300,000 is still needed to fully fund the two year pilot program.

To make your tax deductible donation, please:

- Send a check to: City of Seattle Prostituted Children Rescue Fund, c/o Human Services Department, PO Box 34215, Seattle, WA 98124-4215, or
- Donate by credit card: Call the City of Seattle's Treasury Department at (206) 684-3911 and ask that your contribution be deposited in the Prostituted Children Rescue Fund.